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ABSTRACT

Three inter-related phenomena push the need for educational change and school improvement. These are the change from an agrarian to an industrial, and from an industrial to an information society; the changing demographics that see an increase in student racial and cultural diversity; and the need for new services for low income students. The Springfield Public Schools (Massachusetts) have undertaken change in the following four areas to ensure school reform for today's needs: (1) organizational transformation; (2) pedagogical transformation; (3) societal and attitudinal transformation; and (4) political and financial transformation. The Springfield school system has recognized these areas for change, realizing that the single most important issue is that of equity. It is not how children come to school that matters, but what the school does with them when they get there that makes a difference. The systemic changes in Springfield began with reorganization of the central office, and progressed to restructuring of grades, a curriculum for the 21st century, and research into effective schools and implementation. Initiatives that have developed in the restructuring process include parent participation, a conference for children, and efforts to involve the business and religious communities. The district has made great strides so far, but needs incremental change and frequent small successes to sustain and continue improvement efforts. (Contains 10 references.) (SLD)

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# The Reorganization and Restructuring of an Urban School System

by

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**The Reorganization and Restructuring of an Urban School System**

by
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Superintendent
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For over two decades we in education and those who have reflected on the statistics of public education have made arguments for school reform. With each passing year, it is clearer that to do nothing to change what was and what is in public education is to condemn the future of our young people to a non-productive and unfulfilling life. Lack of action will threaten this country's existence in the competitive global economic market and ultimately to weaken our democracy to such an extent it would be virtually non-existent.

A new way of educating students has been a constant demand. Today, we know what needs to be done. Work in human development, the evolution of business models, and the needed skills for an increasingly complex technological society—all help us to define the work of the schools. Education cannot remain the work of a few in a detached setting.

For too long a period of time, schools were "places on the hill" that nobody cared about; with which nobody interacted. We, as educators, were part of the problem, because we kept everybody out. Possessive pronouns like *my* school or *my* students or *my* curriculum helped to seal schools off from the rest of community life. We need to broaden that ownership and investment.

Schools are the "backbone" and "central nervous system" of any healthy community. In this sense, schools are usually the biggest and most expensive public service provided by a city or town. But we need to understand that a community gets the schools it demands and the schools it deserves. As school have grown "lazy," it is also clear that communities have been generally apathetic in their demands for better schools. We've detached ourselves too much, because it is critical to understand that *everybody* is affected by the schools.

No longer can the school remain isolate and separate from the world. School Based Management with community members, including parents and business representatives as well as teachers and administrators; task forces and formal agreements with interested community groups also must become an integral part of the inclusive philosophy. In all that is done, the school and community must merge for deliberate action. The relevance of even two decades ago is different in 1992 and will be different in 1993. Technology is rapidly changing the world and is rapidly changing us. The pace of change is accelerating. Emerging technology demands cooperative working skills as well as higher thinking skills. Ultimately, education must address the ability to adapt to new and complex situations and to analyze, synthesize and problem solve.

Business leaders, parents, school board members, teachers, students and members of the religious community—even the President—have all shifted in fundamental ways towards a re-examination of what our schools should be doing and what steps need to be taken to make our schools competitive in the new global economy.

**Reasons for change in public education**

But what are the compelling reasons for changing the public schools? If there are no compelling reasons to change, why change? "Change for the sake of change" is not appropriate. I am interested in change that is accompanied by improvement. Indeed, there can be no improvement without change.

Improvement equals change. If there is no change, there is no improvement. Yet people do not want to change. We must be committed to the process that will bring change. This process includes making a community aware of the need to change and making the community assume ownership of the changes as each constituent becomes involved with the change process.

The negative statistics of public education provide ample reasons for change:

- 40-60% drop out rates
- 50% low income families
- 60% or higher minority population
- poor SAT scores
- increasing immigrant groups
- widening performance gap between white and minority students
- high suspension rate
- high absenteeism, up to 40% of the year in the upper grades.

Along with the poor performance in school, we must consider the growing detrimental changes in society that has accompanied the changes in established institutions, expectations, and economy:

- increase use of drugs
- rising unemployment for skilled and unskilled workers
- high teen pregnancy rates
- increased homelessness
- health epidemics
- increase in violence.

All of these statistics are applicable to most if not all urban centers. Indeed the percentages may be even greater in some communities. Each statistic combines to provides a compelling reason for swift reform. Much of what is occurring to American youth and society goes beyond the current framework of established school systems.

The institutions, the structures of the past cannot address the needs of the present and the future. In the political sphere alone, in two years, major world structures collapsed—the Berlin Wall, the Kremlin, Iraq. At home, established politicians are being rejected for new faces who appear

unconnected to an established power structure. On the individual level, families are being redefined. Economic factors force families with two parents to have both working. The influences of the street and the lure of easy money have torn down the values of home, of respect for human life, of education as a means to a better life.

Change is here. Change is fast. Change affects each one of us. Alvin Toffler's Future Shock first made us aware of the rapid changes in all areas of life and that human beings are being altered by these changes. We must take command and address the changes and adapt where necessary. Those whose life have no immediate hope or who are not conscious of the effect on their lives of new experiences, express themselves in anti-social ways. Change is everywhere. Since too much in society has changed, we cannot assume that a system of education can remain dormant and unresponsive to the changes in our time.

Change brings hope for improvement. But change requires looking at the world with new eyes, with new structures. We are at the brink of great innovations that incorporate our experience of the past, but addresses an uncertain and predictably and constantly changing future.

**The elements pushing change and the school improvement agenda**

There are three inter-related phenomena pushing the need for change and school improvement.

First, we have rapidly moved from an agrarian to an industrial and now to an information society. But in many organizational ways, our schools are still structured like we are a nation of farmers rather than a nation of thinkers. This new information society requires a new kind of worker, a new kind of person, to live and succeed. "Strong backs" will not carry the loads of this information and technology-driven age.

Our schools are not providing the know-how and tools for young students to live in this new era. Are we producing thinkers? Are we producing negotiators? Are we producing and preparing young people who are capable of working in teams? Do our schools reflect an understanding of the skills required for the 21st century? When a student "collaborates" with someone else, we call it cheating. And yet, we know that the complexity of the present and future require collaborative efforts to succeed in every field of endeavor.

Second, America is "browning." The demographics reveal that America is not what it used to be—and it will be even more different years from now.

Third, it is not uncommon to find the majority of children in a particular school or school system are from very poor families. The largest and fastest growing segment of the population are the children of the poor.

Teachers cannot continue to go into a school and think that they are going to find students who look like them or who share their values. I often say that parents are sending us the best children they have. They don't keep the good ones at home. These are the children we have. If we cannot educate these children, there are no more children who will follow them.

The need for new skills for a new world, the browning of America, and the need of more services for students affected by their economic class—all combine to produce the compelling reasons for change in public education. These are compelling reasons to change the way we do business.

We as superintendents, however, do not need to be convinced that much must change to forge a better world. What worked well for the few is not sufficient if we truly aim to educate all the children. We know that the answers of the past do not work today. We also know that the solutions rest with the total community. As educators, we are only as successful as the constituencies who participate and affect our school system:

- parents
- business
- religious community
- human service agencies and organizations
- legal and justice community
- schools, including all in the system.

All must work together for systemic change; all must recognize that individually each's efforts is ineffective and short lived. The strength in reform efforts comes from the power that emerges from the combined constituencies.

**The power of reform efforts**

How does one tap that power? How does one channel that power to provide the energy and momentum for school reform? Once tapped, how can that power be controlled and focused on the goals of education? These are the major questions for the superintendent who is charged to reorganize and restructure an urban school system. It is important to note that to successfully reform a school system the established political structure must seek and support that change. Even with a mandate to the superintendent, the forces of denial and the impediments within will exist and use every opportunity to stop and destroy the school improvement process.

Once we accept that all must be involved, how does that involvement become defined? How does the superintendent make all aware of the needed changes and, more importantly, enlist the support of individuals within and without to assist in moving the agenda? The superintendent must analyze the specific situation. If the superintendent has worked up from the ranks in a school system, the perceived need for change may not be there; therefore, the reformer must work with those within and clearly identify the individuals that will grasp quickly the vision and share in the many risks that will follow as change is implemented. If the superintendent is new to the community, the chances are that change is expected; therefore, the superintendent must quickly find those within who will support the initiatives, but also work with constituencies that traditionally have not been given access to the school system. Beginning with parents, these interested groups will help to support the efforts and will learn to participate and refuse to allow a return to the way things were.

**Four areas of change for school reform**

There are four major areas of change that must be addressed to ensure reform: Organizational, Pedagogical, Societal and Attitudinal, and Political (and Financial) Transformations.

1. **Organizational Transformation** is essential as you analyze the needs of the system and the structure that exists. This change involves changes in the school system's leadership, teachers and possible grade organization to reflect correct knowledge in human development. Participatory governance changes the top down pyramid hierarchy. Those who will move the agenda may not be and probably are not those who are in the top positions.

A basic type of organizational change is the grade organization of a school system, which must allow for success in the classroom. When I first arrived in Springfield as superintendent, the schools were organized with a junior high school system and elementary schools that had some children attending one school for kindergarten and another for grades 1-4 and still another for grades 5 and 6. In a kindergarten through grade 12 sequence, a child could attend up to 5 schools, and even more if the family moved within the city. The best a child could have experienced was four schools if the child remained in the same school for kindergarten through grade 4. All this was done to address a 1974 Massachusetts court order to desegregate the schools, which at the time had a rising black population.

The change this past September to kindergarten through grade 5 schools as well as kindergarten through grade 8 options, 6-8 middle schools and 9-12 high schools with a desegregation plan to address the legal requirements was only the first step, the framework for systemic change.

In addition to addressing the pedagogy regarding effective organization of grade levels, we in Springfield had to legally and morally address the desegregation of the schools. The City was under a 1974 court order to desegregate the schools. The initial plan divided the City into six districts for elementary and junior high school students. Magnet schools were created to voluntarily draw students from racially isolated areas of the city. Over the past decades, the community has changed from a community with 36% Black students population and 64% white to the current school population of 38% white, 32% Hispanic, 28% Black, and 2% Asian. With these changes, schools once again became racially imbalanced.

A Controlled Choice Plan for school selection and assignment was introduced and implemented for September, 1991. This Plan received unanimous support from the School Committee and was lauded by the Massachusetts Department of Education. Intensive work over three months in public hearings, neighborhood meetings and media programs allowed for community involvement and provided vehicles for support.

The Controlled Choice Plan involves the six Educational Zones (previously called districts) which provide many options for parents of elementary students within the zone of their residence as well as city-wide and schools within walking distance of the residence in adjacent zones if space is available. With this plan, students are eligible for many schools rather than the one previously

prescribed by their residential address. This Plan also allows for city-wide eligibility for the five middle schools and three high schools.

This complete reorganization of the schools and introduction of a plan not only would provide choice within the school district but would encourage increased parental involvement. A Schools Fair held prior to the three week application period in March provided an opportunity for each of the 40 schools to display their unique programs and draw new students. Over 10,000 parents visited this Fair. The ensuing weeks had parents visiting the schools. All printed materials were translated into Khmer, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese—the languages of our increasing immigrant groups. The involvement was beyond our expectations. Several parents even took a week off from work to visit the schools.

As part of the school choice process and the need for greater parent involvement, Springfield opened a Parent Information Center which has today been expanded to two centers with parent outreach workers, home/school liaisons, and support staff for parent advisory groups.

Organizational Transformation must address more than the obvious, must refer to the very structure and instructional models upon which our schools are based. Many changes have to be made to send the clear message that the ineffective structures and methods of doing business of the past will not remain.

Our schools are presently organized around an industrial model rather an informational model. Schools are presently organized to produce young people that are capable of working in isolation and taking direction. They are meant to produce young people who can relate to machines and not to other people. The role of the school is such that it attempts to extinguish the natural desire of people to gather, be inquisitive and interact. Schools are organized as places where learning is a private psychological matter. The new world requires a total transformation of the organizational structure of schools.

Schools must move to become places where the organizational structure and the pedagogical models stress the importance of producing students who have the following specific skills:

- Higher thinking skills
- Ability to frame new ideas and problem solve
- Creative thinking
- Ability to conceptualize
- Adaptability to change
- Good human relations skills
- Work in a team atmosphere
- Ability to re-learn
- Good oral communication skills
- Negotiation, ability to build consensus, resolve conflicts
- Goal setting, motivation, know-how to get things done
- Self assured and determined to work well
- Have many and varied work skills, including office, mechanical and laboratory skills

- Leadership, ability to assume responsibility and motivate co-workers.

In order to do this, we must transform the organizational norm to one that recognizes and supports people who are able to work together and collaborate on problem identification, analysis and solutions. We must organize schools in such a way that the needs of the students become the focus of the organizational structure. This means we must examine how we use time in the structure. The present practices of grade levels, scheduling, time devoted to specific subject areas, the relationship between subject areas, content coverage, length of school day and school year, and subject matter taught, must all be thoroughly examined. It is probable that the organizational structure of today's schools will be dramatically different in three years. Achieving the goal of developing problem-solving and higher order thinking skills in youth is tricky business that requires a transformation in content and pedagogy as well as in the structure of the educational enterprise.

**2. Pedagogical Transformation** is the ultimate aim if we believe all children can and will learn. There is a growing body of evidence that indicates that present instructional delivery models cannot survive if we are to meet the needs of a 21st century world. It is clear that we have a growing body of knowledge about the way people learn that will strongly influence future pedagogy. These changes are not the traditional changes in methods and approaches. They are based on medical evidence that recognizes the very complex functioning of the human brain. Different people learn in different ways and it is the role of the teacher to adapt teaching techniques to learning styles. This pedagogical transformation will have a profound and lasting influence on schools and how they look in the future.

Real change will take place when we recognize that change must be focused on each school and in each individual classroom. Learning as we know it and as past generations have experienced it has been relatively isolate and private. Change has not and will not occur by imposing new or greater standards or new regulations from the state and federal government.

We must act in a different manner.

- We must not remediate to undo what has been done. Schools need to change the focus and begin to educate children at an earlier age, at age 4. In fact, if public education continues to provide 13 years of education from kindergarten through grade 12, students would enter kindergarten at age 4. Since the number of years of education for each child is not increased, there won't be any additional cost. Students will graduate at a time when there is high demand in the work force for capable workers.

In addition, we must provide a longer educational year as well as a longer day to give students the opportunity to develop the increasingly complex skills and to give teachers the opportunity to plan cooperatively and to enlist the involvement of the home. It is not unreasonable to extend the school year for students to a minimum of 185 days and add one hour to each school day; new demands and roles require an additional 10 days to the school year for teachers to allow for staff development, scheduling, curriculum design as well as an additional hour each day to ensure planning time, parent conferences, and assistance to students.

• The relationship between schools and community must be understood. Site Based Management is one way to legitimize the involvement of all the constituencies as well as the formation of specific groups. In Springfield, as part of the *Blueprint for Excellence*, Phase I in the school improvement process, developed new organizational structures:

1. The Springfield Parent Advisory Network, which is composed of parents from the city who combine to address city-wide issues;

2. The development of agreements between the school system and the major groups in the society, i.e., business, human service agencies, the religious community. Each pledges to join forces with the school system to ensure student achievement , reduce the drop out rate, and provide attendance incentives;

3. The identification of community task forces on key educational issues.

Each of the groups developed their agenda and helped to move the reform efforts forward.

• We must realign our goals with our curriculum. The community must ask what they want their children to know and how will that knowledge be assessed. Assessment must be multi-dimensional.

• We must integrate learning around the technology that exists.

• We must learn organized abandonment; we must not only question but discard old practices that no longer serve us. We must agree on what to teach since there is so much that could be included; we must see the limitations and ineffectiveness of age grade grouping; we must recognize the Carnegie Unit as a process and not a product unit; we must be flexible with scheduling; and we must transform schools where people are told what to do to places where people identify issues and solve problems.

• Choice in schools is an important part of the process, but we must not use choice as a further divider of the haves and have nots.

All in America must see the seriousness of our plight as educators. The relationship between the quality of education and our democracy is clear. The Chinese have one symbol for opportunity and for danger. My challenge is for every American to take risks, to act boldly, to say our children must be saved.

It is this philosophy that has been applied in the School Improvement Plan for the Springfield Public Schools. It would have been too easy to say we cannot try to better our educational program as we faced once again massive budget cuts in many areas; it would have been too easy to say that the state of our schools and our society is too complex for immediate positive results.

I and the entire staff of the Springfield Public Schools are steadfast in our goal to provide an equitable education for all. We have not stood still to await a better day. We have continued to identify the major issues confronting our school system. We recognized our growing student

The political question here surrounds the will of this country to educate those that it has traditionally ignored. Will American society understand the political and economic repercussions and implications of not educating its poor? Will American society support public education in urban centers when the people being educated do not resemble both in class and color the people controlling the economics of those urban centers?

The additional fundamental issue of equity and excellence must also be addressed within the political context. At the present where you are born will to a great extent determine the quality of your education. There are communities in this country that spend $1,200 a year per child while others spend as high as $14,000 per child. While we understand the issue is not money alone, how could anyone accept that there is not an inherent political inequality in this funding approach.

A political transformation is required at the local and federal level in the area of funding public education. We cannot continue to run away from this reality. This is the political issue of our times that must be confronted very soon in this country.

An additional political transformation that must take place revolves around what we teach our children and how we measure what we teach. The how we teach them was dealt with in the pedagogical and organizational transformation. We must come to some political agreement on what we expect our children to know and how we will measure what they know. These two areas demand broad national attention and must be resolved politically.

The final political transformation requires American public education and its governance to remain at the local level. All attempts to nationalize education are filled with danger; however, America must develop a federal funding process that is supportive of an equal education for all. This is one of the major areas of political transformation that must take place during the 1990's.

We as a nation must develop a plan to improve education that includes financial support to deal with all of the issues that face our children. We must combine the appropriate distribution of money with adequate accountability so that money would not be wasted as is the case in so many federal programs.

As I have already indicated, the single most critical issue in education today is one of equity. *Does every child born in America have equal access to an effective and appropriate education?* Our present system is such that if you are born poor, you will more than likely receive an inferior education. The difference between what is spent on poor children and what is spent on middle class children, as I have indicated, is immense. Moreover, the research is clear in support of the implementation of early childhood programs that provide a firm foundation for continued development and academic achievement. Why not begin all schooling at age 4 and continue for 13 years? This change in age would not increase the number of years of K-12 education, but would provide education during those important formative years, and would allow students to end at age 17. Then, they can continue learning as an apprentice at a job or continue a post secondary education. All that we know about the changes in society and the workplace indicate that the worker of tomorrow must be capable in many skill areas and must have higher thinking ability. Beginning earlier and providing a continuum of educational opportunities will go a long way in addressing these new challenges.

The political transformation incorporates financial changes. If we are going too do all of that we have set out to do, we have to have additional resources.

Springfield, Massachusetts is enlightened politically. With tremendous support from the Mayor, we were able to secure some additional funds by passing an override of Proposition 2 1/2, which limits the amount of local taxation. This allowed Springfield to avoid some of the devastating cuts in staffing that other Massachusetts communities have faced in the past few years. But there is a fundamental need to get all of our political leaders to understand the ramifications and basic inequities of how we finance schools from the property tax. It is simply not fair or the American way to allow simple geography to determine what quality of school a child attends.

I realize that money alone is not the answer to our problems in education, but I clearly know that without money, we are not going to get many good solutions to our many problems. There is something ironic—or maybe more like Joseph Heller's Catch-22 for Yossarian—about stating that we're going to set a standard, but we are going to give unequal resources to schools to meet that standard. But that's what we do in America. Put one hundred pound weights around the waists of some children and exhort them to run faster to achieve a standard. So let me state that those children who need the least, get the most; and those children who need the most, get the least. We've got to change that.

I am convinced that it is not how the children come to school that makes the difference, it is what we do when they get there that makes the difference. We must educate all children, even those that may cost more. What we do must be supported financially.

We are at the crossroads of choosing to pay adequately for the education of all children regardless of where they live, the color of their skin, or the language they speak.

The federal government must play a more intensive role in the funding of American public education. The link between our economic survival as a nation and education has been clearly defined. Since children don't come to school in the same way, we must respond to who they are. Some children will cost more money to educate. Therefore, the present system of funding public education must be changed. Everyone must enter the ball park with a ticket to sit in the best seat.

The question is more how America can raise funds for accomplishing this task. I believe we must institute a tax program that specifically raises funds for education. I would propose a U.S. Mail Education Surcharge. Why not a 15 cent education surcharge on every piece of mail with a higher scale for pieces of mail that cost over one dollar? This education tax would affect every individual and every business in our nation. An equitable distribution plan for this money would also be easy to devise.

**Precepts that lead to transformations**

These transformations can take place in America if we understand and accept the following precepts:

1. Money is not the answer but without money we cannot do the job.

2. Children do not come to school the same way; however, it is our response to how they come that makes the difference.

3. Some children cost more to educate than others. It is in our best interest to educate them all.

4. The present system of funding public education is inequitable and must be changed. Where you are born to a great extent determines how much will be spent to educate you.

5. The classroom and school is the unit of change and as such local governance must be promoted, encouraged and maintained.

6. The present model of education must be adjusted so that first time quality becomes the norm and not remediation as is presently the case. Thus, schools must change their focus. Education or Schooling should begin at 4 years old for all youngsters. This can be done without spending additional money. All we would have to do is rearrange our present curriculum and keep kids in school for 13 years; just begin one year earlier. This would take several years to implement.

7. The relationship between the school, the home, and the community must be understood and internalized. Schools need the community and the community needs the schools. They cannot exist independent of each other.

8. We must realign our goals with our curriculum. What is it that students really need to know for the 21st century? It is insane and silly to teach well what these students cannot use. Every community must ask itself what do we want our children to know? What will we accept as evidence that they have learned? How can we measure what they have learned? Multidimensional assessments must be developed to accomplish this task.

9. Our classrooms and the way they look and are organized must change dramatically. We know enough to do this right now. The research on how children learn is exploding before our eyes; yet we have not implemented one-tenth of what we know about learning and teaching.

10. We have not focused on technology as the key to the future. We are not using even one-tenth of the power of technology. We must move from the chalkboard to the electronic whiteboard. We must integrate learning areas around the technology that exists.

11. We must learn the principle of organized abandonment. Abandon the things that have not worked for a long time such as age grade grouping, retention, tracking, standardized tests, the Carnegie unit as a process and not a product unit; we must abandon our present system of scheduling, particularly at the high school level. We must abandon specific student to teacher ratio and let teachers decide what is necessary, appropriate and effective.

12. We must transform our schools from places where people are told what to do, to places where students, parents, teachers and administrators identify the issues and provide the solutions. These constituencies must be able to exercise control over their own destiny. With this control and power will come increased accountability. As we provide the staff with this empowerment, they will be able to greatly influence learning. This should naturally lead them to commanding higher salaries and status.

13. We must use choice as a school reform methodology with great care. It must be crafted so that it does not lead to additional inequities for a segment of our population or as a divider of the haves and have nots.

14. We need massive teacher training programs that will help teachers understand the new ways available to educate their youngsters. This must be done at the school level and planned and developed by teachers.

15. We need additional time in the school day where teachers can plan together around the issues that confront them. Schools must become units of change where teachers see the interdependence of what they teach and how they work and support each other.

16. We need to have everyone in America understand the seriousness of our work and the interdependence of the quality of life in our community and the quality of our schools. We need as a nation to understand the relationship between quality education and the salvation of our democracy .

In Springfield, Massachusetts, a city of 165,000 people with a school population of 25,000 students, and a rising minority population, our restructuring effort involved all forty schools. Systemic change incorporated consideration of the four transformational efforts previously described.

**Need for systemic change**

When I came to Springfield in September of 1989, I was given a charge by the School Committee to bring broad, comprehensive and systemic change to the school system. They had been struck by my comment during the interview process that said if you want to keep getting what you have been getting keep doing what you have been doing. If you want new results, you have to dramatically change what you are doing. The system was ready for change and that change process was detailed in a report called *Blueprint for Excellence* presented to the community in November of

1989. The report was a blueprint for change that would be adjusted and would continue to evolve with the broad input of all the constituencies in the community. Today, two years later, that Blueprint incorporates educational equity and educational access for all children.

The change process had as its main focus the improvement of the schools through collaboration and cooperation. In order to focus the attention of the community on what had to be done four talking papers were prepared and four task forces were created with representatives from every segment of the community. The four task forces were:

1. Central Office Reorganization.
2. Restructuring of Grades
3. Curriculum For the 21st Century
4. Effective Schools Research and Implementation.

The task force reports formed the cornerstone for the work accomplished during the first and second year of this reform effort.

The Central Office reorganization led to a more streamlined Central Office. Since there was to be a massive shift in authority to the schools, the responsibilities of the Central Office would change. The Central Office took on a new role. It moved from the role of director to assistor. Rather than telling people what to do, we became enablers, resource providers or facilitators. This was and continues to be one of the most difficult paradigm shifts in the system.

The second task force came to its conclusions very swiftly in that everyone knew that the K-4, K-5-6, 7-9, and 10-12 organizational structure was antiquated and not working. The task force recommended a conversion to a K-S, 6-8, two K-8 schools, and 9-12 system. In order to do this and also improve our integration efforts which were out of compliance, we developed a Schools of Choice Plan that incorporated elements from controlled choice plans that had been implemented in several cities across the country. The changes, therefore, included a new grade structure for the entire system, a controlled choice plan where each school had developed a very specific theme that made them distinct, the conversion from a junior high school philosophy and approach to a middle school concept as well as the conversion of all 10 to 12 schools to a grade 9-12 high school system. This required the closing of a junior high school and its conversion to a 9th grade annex for a high school. All of the students in the system were given a choice in the selection of four possible schools. Eighty-four percent of the parents received their first choice and dramatic improvement was made in the area of racial balance.

A volunteer transfer plan was developed with the Teachers' Union and over four hundred and fifty teachers were transferred to the schools of their choice. In addition, a special agreement with the Supervisors' Union led to the movement of ten Central Office administrators to school based supervisory positions.

The third task force Curriculum for the 21st Century reaffirmed all of the recommendations in the talking paper which centered around realigning the curriculum so that specific goals and objectives were very defined for teachers. It included the implementation of a technology based

model of assessment that would be developed by teachers. The plan outlined the expectations of a 21st century curriculum which included a detailed process for periodic review in the area of comprehensiveness, authenticity and quality. It also incorporates a broad school centered staff development program as part of the process.

The emphasis of this task force was to create a curriculum process that emphasizes students' ability to reproduce and use knowledge. It also stresses a curriculum for all of the children and not for one that is tailored to a chosen few.

The Effective Schools Research Task Force reaffirmed the intent of the talking paper and went several steps further. It recognized the need to incorporate into the very culture of the system the finding of effective schools research. It led to Lawrence Lezotte and James Comer becoming major consultants to the school system. It also stressed the importance of the continued decentralization of the school system through school centered decision making. All forty schools now have site-based teams that have begun to be responsible for the operation of the school. During contract negotiations with the teachers for the 1991-1992 school year, a side letter was signed that formally introduced site-based management and teacher empowerment into the contract.

In addition to this, the union, the central administration, supervisors and the business community have begun negotiations around the introduction of a total quality management program in the system.

I and the entire staff of the Springfield Public Schools were steadfast in our goal to provide an equitable education for all. We could not stand still to await a better day. We decided, in spite of drastic budget cuts, to identify the major issues confronting our schools system. We recognized our growing student population and the need to fulfill the promise that had been made to the community of a K-8 magnet school; therefore, we pursued plans to build this new school which were formally approved by the state and we broke ground in March for a school that will open in 1991 for 1,000 students. We implemented the Schools of Choice Plan that involved the community in an unprecedented way.

During all this time, economic indicators could have put all on hold. However, I believe that we have waited long enough for educational reform. The economic climate has not been conducive to systemic change. We proceeded with our plans and worked with the city and state officials to provide essential funds. Even though we suffered devastating cuts in the city budget, we were able to participate in the state educational reform efforts. Just this past week Springfield was awarded and additional $2.6 million in an Educational Emergency Assistance Grant from the state. We on the local level took some risks to move forward the school improvement process. We are fortunate that the timing was appropriate and that there is increasing support for educational reform in Massachusetts.

In September 1991, the Springfield Public Schools opened with all grades restructured. The limitations in the budget meant that supplies and textbooks had to be sacrificed to keep the instructional staff and to move forward. The additional funds from the state will help in providing the essential instructional materials.

But we all know that the organization of a system is just the beginning. The framework for excellence in education is set. The results, however, in student achievement are affected by more than grade structure. We have explored alternative solutions to ensure teaching for learning as well as equity and excellence for all children. We have the will to make each school an improving school. Though we have just begun, our journey is clear and direct to making every school in Springfield work for all its children.

In Phase I, we set the framework for school improvement with the *Blueprint for Excellence*, which identified areas of immediate concern and long range planning—all of which included all of the constituencies in a policy of inclusion.

The policy of inclusion included the task forces that were previously described; however, at the same time we developed very specific initiatives to involve the community in our schools. We believe that schools cannot exist in isolation of the community. A community cannot have an effective quality of life without effective schools to support that quality of life.

As such, we developed four major initiatives that would stress the involvement of the broad community. They were Parental Involvement, the Conference for Children, the Business Education Agreement, and the Religious Community Initiative. In the first initiative, we sat with groups of parents and created a parent involvement policy that was truly revolutionary. It created the Springfield Parent Advisory Network (SPAN) which would be an organization that represented all of the parents in Springfield. The policy which was adopted by the school committee created a working parents organization in every school as a requirement of the system. In addition, the parents have been provided professional organizing assistance paid for by the school system. This has created an independent organization that acts as an advocate for children and families.

The Conference for Children was an initiative that convened over three hundred public and private service providers. The intent of the Conference was to develop a process or institution in the city that would become responsible for making the city a child-centered city. These 300 agencies and individuals signed a document that created the Alliance for Youth in the city. A board of directors with representatives from the highest level sits on this board and gives direction to the Alliance for Youth. The Alliance has already developed several major initiatives for the children of the city including a conflict resolution-violence prevention program for students in the middle schools. The Alliance has served a major role in having private and public agencies provide direct services to children in the area of drug prevention, Aids education, mental health services as well as child abuse prevention services.

The Business-Education Agreement was developed by the local Chamber of Commerce and the school system in response to address the issues confronting the schools and the business community. It clearly enumerates the role of business in improving the schools as well as the responsibilities and accountability of the school system. We have over sixty companies participating in a variety of relationships with the schools.

The initiative that possibly the most unique in that I believe it is the first of its kind in America convened over 100 religious leaders at a conference where they signed an agreement relative to how

they would collaborate with the Springfield Public Schools. It very specifically outlined specific steps that the religious community would take to support the public schools. We have agreed as a major undertaking to support together the issue of social justice for all people. We are in the midst of planning specific programs to implement this goal at this time.

In Phase II, we continued dialogue with all the constituencies, addressed program design, redefined responsibilities, trained for new roles and teaching techniques, and implemented a Schools of Choice Plan.

Phase III, during 1991-1992, involves the implementation of solutions, continued training for all constituencies to prepare them for new roles of involvement, the establishment of task forces in four critical planning areas: early childhood, high schools, technology, and retention and tracking.

Four new task forces addressed the issues of pedagogy and program offerings: Early Childhood, Use of Technology in Education, High School Planning, and Tracking and Retention.

The Education Summit currently in the planning and preparation stages for May, 1992, aims to address the educational equity component of the reform effort. Ten communities—business, parents, students, Springfield Public Schools, Afro-American, Puerto Rican/Latino, human services, religious, higher education, neighborhood councils and civic associations—are coming together to plan mini forums for their respective communities that will draw information on the causes, effects, and solutions regarding student achievement. For the first time in Springfield, the achievement data has been disaggregated to show the achievement of all minority groups and has been widely circulated for response. The Education Summit will bring all of the groups together to decide on an united course of action to ensure quality and accessible education for all students.

We have the capacity and the will to make Springfield the first city in the nation with an effective school system. We recognize the changing societal demands and influences on our students. We know what must change within the schools. New interventions and strategies on how to teach as well as renewed commitment and energy are focused on school improvement.

My challenge is for every American to take risks, to act boldly, to say our children must be saved. It is this philosophy that has been applied in the School Improvement Plan for the Springfield Public Schools. It would have been too easy to say we cannot try to better our educational program as we faced massive budget cuts in many areas; it would have been too easy to say that the state of our schools and our society is too complex for immediate positive results.
For those who recognize the need for change to meet the inevitable challenges of future life but wish to slow down the process, I say that world events and local implications are on an accelerated time piece.

Beyond the evident changes, we see reversals:

- countries that limited movement of their citizens now advocate freedom;
- places where capitalism was a bad word now embrace the basic tenets to

address their people's deprivation;

- core curriculum changes that include and embrace non-western cultures and works;
- career plans that suited a life time must now incorporate multiple skills and directions;
- traditional family structures are being challenged by alternative structures;
- limited expectations for females relegated to an ideal view of the home has changed to allow equal access to careers—not due to equity but to necessity both in the home and the workplace;
- isolation of the races and mobility for limited groups no longer works in a pluralistic society that requires all for economic and social success.

In 1970, John Holt wrote in *What Do I Do Monday?*—"Every day's headlines show more clearly that the old ways, the 'tried and true' ways, are simply and quite spectacularly not working. No point in arguing about who's to blame. The time has come to do something very different. The way to begin is—to begin." Two decades is long enough to wait to begin. In Springfield, we cannot continue to accept a 40% drop out rate (60% among Hispanics); we cannot continue to blame others for the lack of individual success without addressing that which we can control; we cannot assume that the curriculum and methods of the past will serve us well in the present since those of us here are the survivors of a system that did not attempt to educate all children. We cannot postpone what is morally right.

I consider these accomplishments to be outstanding feats for such a short period. Of course there is a down side to this as there is to every story. The systemic chang-es necessary to institutionalize all of this has not taken place, yet. There is a reluctance to give up the old and more importantly to relinquish power. There is a hesitancy at every juncture to agree to a process that will allow for multiple inputs and shared decision making if it leads to the loss of power.

What is required is incremental change and frequent small successes (measures of growth) that one can point to as the basis for further movement. Our role is to make the system work for the people it serves and not the people who run it. However, public institutions or systems, do not and will not reform themselves. They need coaxing, coercing, and reasons to change. They need outside intervention. My sense is that this bold experiment can work. Not enough has been done yet in Springfield to merit distinction—but we do merit watching.

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